

Dodd Blames Press Hoax For Downfall Of Diem

STATINTL

Washington, Feb. 23 (AP)—Senator Dodd (D., Conn.) charged today that a hoax for which he blamed some of the press brought the downfall of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam.

He criticized no newspaper by name.

Dodd made the accusations in a letter appended to a Senate-financed reprint of a 324-page report released last December 9 by a United Nations fact-finding commission which had visited Vietnam.

"Virtually Ignored"

The reprint was made at Dodd's request as an official Senate Internal Security subcommittee document "for the information of senators," Dodd said in a statement.

He said he made the request because he believes the report was "virtually ignored by the press for more than two weeks after its release date until some

enterprising commentators got hold of the story."

Noting that the United Nations made no formal findings on their study of allegations of serious violations of human rights by the Diem regime, including persecution of Buddhists, Dodd declared:

"I believe that any objective person would have to conclude from reading it that the accounts of massive persecution of the Buddhist religion were, at the best, vastly exaggerated, and, at the worst, a sordid propaganda fraud."

Spontaneity Doubted

The Diem Government was toppled last November 1, and Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu, his strongman brother-in-law, were slain.

Dodd said that "some of the testimony presented in the report raises doubts about the authenticity and the spontaneity of suicides" by Buddhists who burned themselves to death in Saigon streets in protest against alleged persecution by the Diem Government.

Dodd said the fact-finders did not report on political motives but that he believes Communist propaganda was behind many of the atrocity stories.

He said the report quoted a 19-year-old Buddhist monk as stating that he had been talked into agreeing to burn himself to death with stories of atrocities and promises that he would be given pain-killing drugs. He said the youth was prevented by the police from setting himself ablaze.

Dodd said the mission told also of interviewing a number of Buddhists who had been reported killed, and that the mission "could find no evidence to substantiate published reports in the press that Buddhist monks had been thrown from upper stories during the raid on the Xa Loi pagoda."

"What all this adds up to, in my opinion," Dodd wrote, "is that the American people have once again been grievously misinformed by some of their newspapers on a foreign situation that vitally concerns them."

Mihailovic-Tito Case

Dodd said that "important American newspapers" during World War II pictured the Yugoslav underground leader, Draza Mihailovic as a collaborator with the Nazis, and portrayed Tito as a hero, and "the result was the betrayal of Mihailovic and the installation of a Communist regime."

He said that "some of these papers" reported that China's Chiang Kai-shek "was a crook and the Chinese Communists were agrarian reformers and the result was a confusion of policy that led to the installation of a Communist regime in China."

"Chaotic Situation"

Dodd said "there were papers" which contended that Cuba's Fidel Castro was not a Communist but a "cross between Robin Hood and Thomas Jefferson; and the result was a Communist regime in Cuba."

"Now we have been the victim of still another hoax, in consequence of which the Government of Ngo Dinh Diem has been destroyed and a chaotic situation has been created that will make a Communist takeover more difficult to resist," he wrote.

Dodd said Congress and the Administration are influenced by what they read in the newspapers and thus "the press has a policy-making role."